

‘Politics plays key role in fisheries governance’



Politics, rather than science, played a key role in marine fisheries governance in South Asia, said Maarten Bavinck, a Dutch scientist specialised in the capture fishery of India and Sri Lanka.

The dispute between India and Sri Lanka over fishing activities in the Palk Bay remained unsolved due mainly to political reasons, he said, delivering a lecture on “Tropical marine fisheries governance and the way forward,” at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute here on Tuesday.

The lecture was organised by the Marine Biological Association of India.

He called for containing political influence in fisheries governance and said, “In India, fisheries governance has a political dimension. Norms and priorities are not being established by science but is being debated in the public domain”.

Mr. Bavinck, who is a professor at the University of Amsterdam, said that the Tamil Nadu government should take action to reduce the size of its fishing fleet in the Palk Bay to resolve the conflict in the region.

Trawling would have to be contained in the Palk Bay, where these operations had caused social and economic hardship for 25,000 small-scale fishers and their families in northern Sri Lanka. It had also triggered political tensions between India and Sri Lanka, he said.

Interacting with CMFRI scientists, he said that science-based guidelines were needed to ease the tension in the region. For this purpose, the CMFRI and the Sri Lankan National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency should take up joint studies and adopt coordinated approaches.

The scientist also called for ecological and marine biological studies to estimate the damage being caused to the rich resources in the Palk Bay due to intensive trawling as well as to restructure the fisheries sector to maximise benefits.